

a same-sex partner seeking Social Security survivor benefits for her child after her civil union partner died.

In every case, she fought to secure legal protections and equality under the law. In fact, Beth changed the trajectory of LGBTQ rights in this country. Her tireless work has led our Nation toward justice.

Unfortunately, in what is becoming more and more of a toxic atmosphere, Justice Robinson's path to confirmation has faced baseless attacks. At her confirmation hearing, Justice Robinson's commitment to religious liberty was called into question. Now, these attacks are simply not grounded in reality. Any honest reading of her record proves that Justice Robinson is committed to protecting religious liberty. Some members argued that Robinson's work representing a Catholic woman who believed she had been discriminated against due to her own religious beliefs was, astonishingly, evidence of Robinson's hostility toward religious liberty.

At Justice Robinson's hearing, other members of the Judiciary Committee quoted her out of context in what I saw as an attempt to support a false narrative. One member of the committee read part of a sentence from a marriage law symposium that Justice Robinson participated in and suggested that it was proof of her hostility toward religious liberty.

I said "read part of" it, but the attack line falls apart the moment you bother to read the full sentence. In the full quote, Justice Robinson states:

I've always said that if somebody tried to force the Catholic Church to do a gay wedding, I would represent the Church pro bono.

You can't construe that as hostility to religious freedom.

Justice Robinson has a long record of supporting the fundamental right to religious liberty, both as a judge and as an advocate.

The Vermonters I have heard from—regardless of party or ideology, regardless of their religion—are delighted that President Biden nominated Beth Robinson to fill the Vermont seat on the Second Circuit. Our leading Republicans, our leading Democrats agree with that.

If confirmed, she knows she will become the first openly gay woman to serve on a Federal circuit court of appeals.

I would urge all Senators to evaluate Justice Robinson's record. And I hope that Senators of both parties will see, as I have, that she possesses exactly the right qualities, skills, and experience to excel as a judge on the Second Circuit.

Before I was in the Senate, I had the privilege to argue cases before the Second Circuit. I saw it as a court where you never thought of whether they were Republicans or Democrats; you thought about their abilities, and I always felt comfortable arguing there. Justice Robinson, when she becomes Judge Robinson, will give that same

view to anybody who is a litigant before that court.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

VETERANS DAY

Mr. TUBERVILLE. Mr. President, in 1919, President Woodrow Wilson declared November 11 as Armistice Day, marking an agreement the year prior between the Allied Nations and Germany to temporarily cease fighting during World War I.

President Wilson said:

The reflections of Armistice Day will be filled with solemn pride in the heroism of those who died in the country's service and with gratitude for the victory, both because of the thing from which it has freed us and because of the opportunity it has given America to show her sympathy with peace and justice in the councils of the nations.

In battles before World War I and in battles since, our servicemembers and veterans have served to protect the American way of life. Every year, our country pauses on November 11 to recognize our veterans with the solemn pride and gratitude that President Wilson referenced.

We all wake up each morning and enjoy the freedoms this great country affords us because of our veterans—because it was our veterans, our men and women in uniform, who were there when their country needed them most. While their roles span multiple theaters and decades, our veterans were and continue to be united by a common mission: to protect and to defend the United States of America. This is a great responsibility they shouldered, and they deserve gratitude equal to their great sacrifice. Our veterans may say that they are just ordinary Americans doing their job. They may be ordinary, but they performed an extraordinary service to our country.

Alabama is home to nearly 400,000 veterans, and today it is my honor to recognize a few of them for their service. I have had the pleasure of meeting many veterans from my great State, and I am always inspired by their service and their sacrifice.

Their patriotism is unmatched, and their courage is unwavering, like that of CPL Edsel Bonds of Samson, AL, who experienced a shell blast to his right femur on January 28, 1966, while on a mission to intercept guerillas during the Vietnam war. The blast blew out 4 inches of his femur bone and several muscle groups. He spent most of a year recovering in the hospital from this horrific injury and never lost the love for his country.

Now, nearly 56 years later from the time of his injury, he is just as patriotic as ever. He views his service as something that was necessary for our country to remain the greatest country in the world. Corporal Bonds risked life and limb because he believed that America is worth sacrificing for.

We enjoy the blessings of living in a free nation but often discount the fact that our liberties come with a tremen-

dous cost. Many brave men and women have paid a price that even our deepest gratitude could never, ever repay.

I think Elmer Davis, the Director of the U.S. Office of War Information during World War II, said it best:

This nation will remain the land of the free only so long as it is home of the brave.

One-hundred-year-old SGT George Mills of Decatur, AL, showed great bravery during his time serving in World War II. The Germans surrounded his company 500 yards from the German border and launched attacks into the building where they were staying, setting it on fire. With no ammunition left to defend the enemy, Sergeant Mills and his fellow comrades were forced to surrender.

For the next 5 months, George Mills and his company were marched across Europe toward the former Czechoslovakia without food. They were starved and no doubt weary. Yet Sergeant Mills and his company persevered. They survived by eating scraps of sugar beets and rutabagas found in barns where they were held captive before they were finally liberated on April 13, 1945.

During this initial attack, Sergeant Mills, despite being injured, sprang to action to help save the lives of those in his company. He was awarded a Purple Heart for his bravery.

Another American hero is Fred Lacy of Auburn, AL. A lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army, Mr. Lacy provided valuable leadership and negotiation skills during his time in Europe, Korea, and Vietnam. He and his brigade helped defend the western half of the Korean demilitarized zone at the end of the Korean war, ensuring that there were no weaknesses in our defense for North Korea to attack. During the Vietnam war, he coordinated all U.S. activity in the Mekong Delta and assisted the Vietnamese in combating the Vietcong.

He volunteered in a leprosy orphanage in his free time while staying there. He was a natural at building relationships and resolving conflicts during his time. During a dispute between a Vietnamese and an American officer, Fred stepped in front of a gun to prevent the American officer from being shot.

He received two Bronze Stars and the Combat Infantryman Badge for his leadership and courageous efforts. When reflecting on his service, he says that it was "a privilege to serve." That spirit of service is something he carries with him even after his time in the military.

Lieutenant Colonel Lacy has taught Bible classes for more than 60 years and still teaches today at Auburn United Methodist Church.

We, as citizens of this country, are privileged to have veterans like Lieutenant Colonel Lacy who have not only honorably fought for our freedom but have also proudly carried the torch of liberty across the world. They love their country, and you don't have to talk with them very long before you

understand how much of a driving force it is to them.

CPL Clyde Haynes from Vestavia Hills, AL, served in the Army Air Corps' 439th Troop Carrier Group during World War II. Mr. Haynes shared the joy of walking with children in France as they rushed out of their houses and filled the streets to celebrate their new liberation from Nazi rule. He said that he "wished he had a picture of that." Even though he does not have a physical photograph, you can tell that he holds that memory near and dear to his heart.

Even though Mr. Haynes is now 100 years old, he is just as moved by that moment now as he was at that time because freedom is a powerful thing. But freedom does not come without cost. There are many servicemembers who pay the ultimate price for our freedom and never return home. There are families left behind who sit down to dinner every night with an empty seat at the table knowing that life for them will never be the same. They, too, have shouldered the cost of America's liberty and deserve our gratitude.

For our servicemembers who do return home, their struggles do not end after they reach American soil. They continue to face challenges from what they have endured while in service and from the difficult reentry into civilian life.

Most of us will never know the full weight of preserving our freedom, never have to endure sleepless nights from the harrowing memories of the battlefield, bear pain from war injuries, or miss important events with family and friends, like Ryan Charrier from Orange Beach, AL, who served as a U.S. Air Force technical sergeant in the war in Afghanistan, with the 442nd Fighter Wing. He received his first deployment when his children were just 8 and 4 years old. Sergeant Charrier said he was a bit older than his fellow fighters. He left behind young children but served with soldiers who missed births of their first children or deaths of family members.

A veteran's life is so much more than just time in service. There is also the reintegration to civilian life, which requires just as much bravery, courage, and sacrifice. Sergeant Charrier's reminder to Americans is powerful:

We as a country promised that we would never forget . . . so I hope that every patriotic American will keep the promise of never forgetting. Just because the war may have winded down, doesn't mean our men and women who served the last 20 years still don't need the support of every American.

These veterans—Edsel Bonds, George Mills, Fred Lacy, Clyde Haynes, and Ryan Charrier—are heroes, just like millions of brave men and women who have selfishly sacrificed throughout the decades. Their stories should inspire all of us to show a greater love for our country and our fellow Americans.

Thirty-three years ago on Veterans Day in 1988, Ronald Reagan said:

We remember those who were called upon to give all a person can give, and we remember those who were prepared to make that sacrifice if it were demanded of them in the line of duty. Most of all, we remember the devotion and gallantry with which all of them ennobled their nation as they became champions of a noble cause.

May we join together as a nation this Veterans Day to honor our veterans who have served this Nation and defended our freedom and values that we hold so dear. To our veterans, I say: Thank you for your sacrifice. Our Nation will be forever indebted to you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

LOCAL SCHOOL BOARDS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, communities across our great Nation are dealing with a startling spike in violent crime. Last year, the murder rate soared by nearly 30 percent, the largest single-year jump on record.

The American people are paying close attention, and they are concerned. A poll this summer found that nearly 60 percent of Americans are worried about crime. The percentage of those who say they are extremely concerned is at the highest point in more than two decades, and folks largely think not enough is being done to address this spike.

A separate poll found that 65 percent of Americans are dissatisfied with policies to reduce or control crime. That is up more than 16 percent from 2020. Perhaps this is an offshoot of the "defund the police" movement that we have seen in radical circles over the last year or so.

With such a dramatic and shocking jump in homicides and violent crime and the clear belief that more should be done to address it, you would expect that the U.S. Department of Justice would be in an all-hands-on-deck posture. After all, this is the highest law enforcement agency in the country. You would think it would take a leading role in finding ways to keep our country and our communities safe.

Unfortunately, leaders at the Department of Justice in the Biden administration believe that they have bigger fish to fry. Forget stopping murderers and violent criminals. The most forceful language we have seen recently from the Attorney General hasn't been about stopping dangerous criminals; it is about going after concerned parents at school board meetings. That is right—communities across the country are worried about violent crime, and the Biden Justice Department is worried about parents who are concerned about what their kids are learning in school.

This all started with a deeply misguided letter from the National School Boards Association about heated school board meetings across the country.

Parents who are concerned about things like critical race theory and other controversial topics, who are

simply worried that their kids aren't learning about American history and civics and the foundations upon which this great country was built, they have taken their concerns to school board meetings—something they have every right; indeed, a constitutional right—to do.

I want to be clear: there is no place for violence or threats of violence in our public discourse. It doesn't matter who you are or what you are fighting for: violence is not the answer.

But rather than allow State and local law enforcement authorities to intervene in those rare circumstances when things go off track, the school board leaders at the National School Boards Association went nuclear. They encouraged the Biden administration to treat these parents like something akin to domestic terrorists. They advocated for unleashing the full arsenal and might of the Department of Justice and the Federal Bureau of Investigation on concerned parents—concerned parents. And the Attorney General was, apparently, happy to oblige their outrageous demands.

The National School Boards Association letter argued that a parent who disagrees with the curriculum in their children's school could be investigated under the PATRIOT Act.

You will remember the PATRIOT Act was passed after 9/11/2001 to address radical extremists who had just killed 3,000 Americans in attacks at the Pentagon and in New York.

Unsurprisingly, this letter from the National School Boards Association was met with fierce and immediate blowback. I don't know how they didn't see it coming. Concerned parents and terrorists don't share anything in common.

Well, after the negative press, the National School Boards Association eventually retracted their letter and apologized. They admitted that there was "no justification for some of the language included in the letter," but the damage had already been done.

A few days later, after the letter was sent, Attorney General Garland decided to get into the game, and he published a memo directing Federal law enforcement to inject itself into local school board elections.

Well, we had a chance to question Attorney General Garland last week, when he appeared before the Senate Judiciary Committee, and he conceded that his decision to send out a memo to the Federal law enforcement was based almost entirely on the letter from the National School Boards Association and "news reports."

Of course, the Attorney General could not cite any specific examples that he relied upon before unleashing the awesome power of the Federal Government on parents, nor could he provide any data or evidence that local enforcement was incapable of handling any incidents that might occur.

In his memo, the Attorney General also encouraged the Federal authorities to take action far beyond any